



Senator Tom Wyss

200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

News from the Indiana State Senate

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I serve the citizens
of Senate District 15, which
includes portions of
Allen County.

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Send letters to:
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Start Buckling Up Kids Today

In my spring newsletter, I informed you of the new law I sponsored regarding child safety restraints. While the law does not take effect until July 1, 2005, I want to urge every parent and grandparent to start applying this important safety standard to their lives now.

Starting next summer, all children under 8 years old must sit in child restraint systems that allow the vehicle's seatbelt to work properly. Those children able to use the manufacturer's restraint system properly without aid are exempt from this provision. The law also make seatbelts mandatory for children 8-16.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that children between the ages of 4 and 7 who use child restraint systems are 59 percent less likely to be

injured in a crash. Children ages 2 to 5 who are prematurely graduated to safety belts alone are four times more likely to suffer a serious head injury.

I am proud to be a citizen of Allen County, which leads the state in booster seat checks and giveaways. In May, I joined [SAFE KIDS of Allen County](#). Made possible by a charitable donation from Dorel/Cosco and Evenflo, we gave away 266 child restraint seats and inspected hundreds of others. We owe these two corporations a huge debt of gratitude. Thanks to their generosity, 266 more children are protected.

Visit the Indiana SAFE KIDS Coalition website to find the dates of upcoming child seat clinics at www.preventinjury.org.

CollegeChoice Program Provides Financial Options for Families

For children, fall marks the beginning of the school year. For many parents, it brings the stark reality of college and its subsequent costs one year closer to fruition. With tuition prices skyrocketing, the dream of college can quickly turn into a nightmare. The state of Indiana now provides parents with a tool to help finance their children's higher education and gain extra tax benefits as a result.

Since 1997, CollegeChoice allows anyone over age 18 to contribute money into a group investment portfolio made up of a strategic mix of stocks, bonds and money market funds. The program provides contributors with an easy, hands-off way to save for college. Once enrolled, a team of experienced professionals manage the portfolio in order to maximize investment growth.

Individuals can establish an account with just \$50 per portfolio and \$25 subsequent monthly installments until contributions reach \$236,750. No enrollment or application fee exists. The enrollee can name any person as a beneficiary regardless of age and

the beneficiary can change at the enrollee's discretion.

Additionally, the investment grows tax-deferred and remains exempt from federal taxes if used for qualified higher education expenses. Whether public or private, the funds can be used at any eligible accredited post-secondary school, including graduate and vocational-technical schools.

Assuming only a 5 percent annual price increase, experts estimate that parents can expect to pay \$143,000 to put a child born today through four years of in-state public college and about \$306,000 for a private college. This sobering statistic highlights the importance of saving for college early. CollegeChoice offers individuals a useful tool to make sure college remains a dream, not a nightmare.

For more information
www.collegechoiceplan.com
or call 1-866-400-PLAN (7526)

Get Involved!

..... How you can participate in the Indiana General Assembly

Voting is one very important way to make sure your views and concerns are being represented in government, but there are many other ways citizens can get involved to make our state a better place to live.

Write letters: During a typical day, a public official receives dozens of e-mails and letters with messages conveying his or her constituents' interest in a particular bill or issues. The key to getting your public officials' attention is to keep it simple, keep it short and make sure it's directed to the right person.

Attend Interim Study committees: During the interim, state legislators and local leaders meet publicly in study committees and commissions to discuss a variety of topics and decide if legislation is needed during the upcoming session. This is a great opportunity to hear discussion and voice your opinion. You can find meeting times online at: www.in.gov/legislative/interim/calendar. The calendar is updated regularly.

Attend Standing Committees: The legislative session allows the opportunity for citizens to come to the Statehouse and listen to proposed legislation and provide

public testimony. Sometimes, you must request an opportunity to speak by contacting the committee chairmen before the meeting. Find information online at: www.in.gov/legislative/session/calendars.

Visit web sites: The General Assembly and all state agencies have web sites that are available with information on a variety of topics and who to contact if you want more information. The General Assembly site has an area dedicated to when committee meetings are going, legislative surveys and links to e-mail your senator. Go to www.in.gov/legislative or visit www.in.gov/senate_republicans.

Organize or attend local events: Many local communities have a variety of organizations dedicated to furthering a cause or improving the lives of its citizens. A great way to stay involved and give back is to attend functions sponsored by these groups. If you feel that an area needs representation, form an organization and work together to further your cause.

If you do not have Internet access at home, you may visit the computer station at your public library.

Consumer Information

Unclaimed Property

The Attorney General reports thousands of unclaimed property listings all across the state of Indiana. Some possible sources of unclaimed property are: credit balances, old savings and checking accounts, unpaid wages, mutual fund shares, insurance proceeds, uncashed traveler's checks, and utility deposits.

You can contact the Indiana Attorney General's office to see if you or a relative has a claim. Visit www.indianaunclaimed.com or call, toll-free, **1-866-IN-CLAIM** (1-866-462-5246).

Unwanted Faxes

Contact the Federal Communications Commission to report any unsolicited faxes. You can file a formal complaint at www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html or call, toll-free, **1-888-225-5322**.

Direct Mail Lists

Tired of receiving advertising through the mail? Remove your name from direct mail lists by visiting

www.dmaconsumers.org or write to:

Mail Preference Service
Attn: Dept 12851374
Direct Marketing Association
PO Box 282
Carmel, NY 10512

National No-Call List

Indiana led the way with the creation of a no-call registry. Federal legislators followed suit by creating a national do not call list. Consumers now can list both home and mobile phone numbers in order to prevent unsolicited telemarketing calls. To register your phone number on the national list, visit www.donotcall.gov. Additions to the list are updated every three months.



F.A.Q.

Frequently Asked Questions About Indiana State Government

Q: Why is the Indiana General Assembly called a "citizen legislature?"

A: Indiana lawmakers spend only a few months each year at the Capitol. The rest of the year, each legislator lives and works in the district he or she represents. Retirement allows Sen. Wyss to spend 2-3 days a week doing constituent work during the interim. Our part-time legislature offers substantial savings to Indiana taxpayers. The National Conference of State Legislatures ranks Indiana 45 among the 50 states with regard to the expenditures of the legislature per capita.

Q: Where is the money generated from gaming profits, such as the Hoosier Lottery, river boats, pari-mutuel, etc., going?

A: Of the \$670 million of the state's share of gaming profits in 2003, \$294 million was dedicated to the Property Tax Replacement Fund to help subsidize homeowners' local property tax bills through payment of homestead credits. The second-largest share, \$236 million, cuts the "license plate tax," the excise tax Indiana motorists pay annually when renewing their vehicle license plates, by up to 50 percent yearly. Since the inception of the Hoosier Lottery in 1989, \$432.6 million has gone toward teachers' pensions and \$244.7 million has gone toward retirement benefits for police and firefighters.

Q: How does the General Assembly function when it is not in session?

A: The Legislative Council is composed of 16 legislators, including the speaker of the House, Senate president pro tempore, and floor leaders of the majority and minority parties. It is designed to provide an interim coordination structure for the General Assembly. Created in 1967 by combining and expanding existing legislative service agencies, the Council assists the General Assembly through its selection of interim study committees, research, fiscal analysis, and bill drafting staff.

Q: How does a senator author a bill?

A: A senator takes an idea for a bill to the non-partisan Legislative Services Agency. The staff provide necessary legal, fiscal, and research capabilities for the General Assembly. Drafting legislation, including major revisions of the Indiana Code, compiling and publishing the rules and regulations of state agencies, assisting study committees during the interim and standing committees during session, and furnishing figures on the estimated cost of existing or proposed state services are among the tasks performed by the LSA staff.

Senators Study Variety of Topics In Summer Committee Meetings

Wyss serves on a bevy of legislative panels during interim

This year, Wyss will vice-chair the **Committee on Professional Licensing, and Consumer Issues**. The committee plans to discuss the creation of minimum mandatory training standards for fire-fighters as well as predatory gasoline pricing.

Wyss was reappointed to the **Legislative Council**. The council serves as the bipartisan, bicameral body established to oversee the administrative affairs of the General Assembly when the legislature is not in session.

Wyss was also reappointed to the **Counterterrorism and Security Council**. Wyss is the Senate representative to the council, which develops and implements a comprehensive state strategy to address terrorism in Indiana. It also serves as Indiana's liaison to the federal Office of Homeland Security.

Always maintaining an interest in minority affairs, Wyss proudly lends his expertise as a member of the **Commission on**

Hispanic/Latino Affairs, the **Interagency State Council on Black and Minority Health**, and the **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission**. Additionally, Wyss will serve on the following panels:

Regulatory Flexibility Committee

The committee discusses utility issues and provides oversight to the telephone, gas, and electric industries.

Interim Study Committee on Corporate Taxation

The committee will study the use of passive investment corporations by companies doing business in Indiana.

The Indiana Emergency Management, Fire and Building Services, and Public Safety Training Foundation

This committee administers funds appropriated to the foundation through the sales of State Emergency specialty plates and acquires property to be donated to a unit of local government



SNAPSHOT- Senator Wyss inks with several law enforcement officers present for a press conference on the passage of his Senate bill designed to make seat belt restraints mandatory for all vehicles.

While the fast pace of session ended in March, senators still have a lot of work to do during the summer and fall months, also known as the interim.

Legislators form commissions, study committees and advisory boards to examine issues in detail and to give more focused attention to particular issues not addressed during the legislative session.

HoosierRx Program Discounts Prescription Drugs for Low-Income Senior Citizens

America leads the world in pushing the bounds of science to bring new prescription drugs to the market, resulting in lives saved and an increased quality of life. There are high costs involved in bringing these drugs to the open market. Part of that price tag is passed on to the consumer, which causes patients who do not have drug coverage to suffer financially. As a relief to those patients, some new programs have been established to help with the costs of prescription drugs.

The U.S. government has launched a new drug discount card that will provide immediate financial relief to seniors. This program, which took effect on June 1, allows recipients to choose a discount card program that best suits their needs. Medicare will be providing reliable and accessible information. Anyone who is enrolled in Medicare Part A or Part B

and not receiving Medicare benefits is eligible for the discount drug card program. For more information or to become enrolled, you may call **1-800-MEDICARE** (1-800-633-4227) or visit the Medicare website at www.medicare.gov.

HoosierRx is a state program that helps to shift the cost of prescription drugs away from low-income seniors. HoosierRx was enacted four years ago by the General Assembly and allows seniors who qualify to receive a 75 percent discount on the cost of medications. This program will be coordinated with the Medicare discount drug card to maximize savings. Low-income seniors can sign up for the HoosierRx Drug Card by calling, toll-free, **1-866-267-4679** or by visiting www.in.gov/HoosierRx. Local pharmacies will also have applications.

The Indiana Senate Page Program

The General Assembly offers students an important learning opportunity at the Statehouse.

Any student from 6th grade to 12th grade can sign up to serve as a page for a day. Students will be excused from school for the day.

Pages spend a day in the Senate assisting their local legislators. Responsibilities include responding to senators' requests, delivering messages and running errands. The day includes a tour of the Statehouse and observation of a session, if one is in progress.

Those interested in serving as a page should send their name, age, address, phone number and school affiliation to my office. The Page Office will begin accepting requests in November.